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ABSTRACT

This workshop presentation offers an introduction to and suggestions for a multicultural approach to teaching through music experiences. Experiences presented include: (1) "Funga Alafia," a welcome song from Liberia; (2) "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree," an American traditional game song; (3) a Japanese version of "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree"; and (4) "Mos' Mos'!," a Native American (Hopi) song about a cat. A segment of the presentation, "The Challenge for Teaching Multiculturally" briefly outlines several teacher qualities necessary to the task of cross-cultural music education. (Contains 13 references.) (MM)

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A Kaleidoscope of Cultures and the Arts

Presented at the NCEA Convention

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

By

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Introduction

Our goal during this brief time is to explore and enjoy the arts while being surrounded by a multicultural backdrop. While we will only scratch the surface in terms of this vast area of interest, you will no doubt come to realize that there are many ways in which you and your students can experience the arts and, through them, come to know and appreciate the uniqueness of other cultures.

We have been hearing about the multicultural approach in education for quite some time now. While some teachers have become very committed to this approach, others find aspects of it problematic, such as how much to include, which countries, and what to do if they themselves feel limited in their knowledge about a specific country. Being an educator today and tomorrow means working within an ethnically diverse society. This can be exciting. Multicultural education means focusing on more than just the customs, religious beliefs, family structures, and diverse socio-economic backgrounds of peoples. When multicultural learning occurs, students witness within the classroom the positive qualities of one another. Negatively biased cultural stereotypes and preconceived notions are replaced by understanding and greater awareness.

In this presentation the following plan will be followed:

1. An introduction to the various arts, music, drama, storytelling, movement (dance) and the visual arts as a means of celebrating our similarity and diversity.

2. Suggestions for ways that a classroom teacher might use the arts when teaching from a multicultural perspective.

3. Consideration of specific cultures using hands-on arts' experiences.

So, we will get started with a little Welcome Song from Liberia!

Experience #1: "Funga Alafia" (from Music and You Grade 4 Macmillan Company)

"A" Section:* Fun-ga a-la-fia Ah-shay ah-shay
Fun-ga a-la-fia Ah-shay ah-shay

"B" Section: (Spoken using hand gestures; drumbeat can maintain steady pulse)

With my brains I welcome you.
With my words I welcome you.
With my heart I welcome you.
See? I have nothing up my sleeve!

Repeat "A" Section.

*Extension: When students can chant the "A" section, invite them to form a circle and, moving counterclockwise, move to the steady beat: left foot to the side, right foot then crossing in front of the left foot; left foot to the side followed by right foot in back of left foot. Repeat this pattern three more times. If "A" section is repeated, follow the same pattern, this time moving to the right.

A multicultural approach to learning centers around organizing educational experiences for students that encourage and develop understanding and sensitivity to peoples from a broad spectrum of ethnic backgrounds. If students are to learn from a multicultural perspective, teachers need to develop or enhance their own educational philosophy that includes recognizing the inherent worth and endeavors of different cultural groups. Multicultural education acknowledges that there are many different but equally valid forms of artistic expression. This serves to encourage students to develop a broad perspective based on understanding, tolerance, and respect for a variety of opinions and approaches.

We, as teachers, may need to revisit our present philosophy of education and consider how it has changed since our early years of teaching. Whatever educational beliefs/standards I adhere to are reflected in what and how I teach and, ultimately, in how my students learn. Flowing from this would also be a consideration of what are my present fears, hesitations, or anxieties around the issue of teaching from a multicultural perspective. While there are no cut and dried solutions for resolving all of ones anxieties and inhibitions, there are some approaches that might prove to be very helpful. For example:

a) Perhaps the best way, although not the most realistic way, to learn about another culture is to actually go there! There is no substitute for becoming totally immersed in the country, customs, and the culture. Two years ago I had the privilege of teaching for a semester in Japan, in a little town outside of Nagoya where very few people actually spoke or understand English. Reading signs, getting around on the train, and shopping were daily challenges. It was only when I started visiting a number of elementary and junior high schools, observing their art and music classes, that I realized that I did not need fluency in Japanese. I could participate and learn way beyond the spoken word!

b) Since visiting countries first-hand is not possible in most cases, a more realistic approach to learning about a culture is to get to know a person or some people from a specific culture. Talk to them and try to learn as much as you can from them. Share your

insights and allow them to do the same. Frequently, your own faculty, parents of children and the students themselves have much to offer. Invite them to share with you and your class. Start slowly, learn a little bit at a time, and you will gain confidence along the way.

c) An important way to engage in multicultural teaching is to participate in a culture. Learn about it by doing! Go beyond the spoken word. One very good way to do this is to become engaged through the various arts - song, movement, story, the visual arts. Even if you feel limited in any one or more of these disciplines your students will be with you in the endeavor. Presenting the culture with everyone learning about it through active participation will soften any big inhibitions you might have with regard to personal talent in the arts. And your attitude, one of learning, one of questioning, one of trying, will make a bit difference in the manner in which your students respond.

There is an important document which all educators need to know about if they wish to justify the importance of using the arts in their teaching as well as the need to teach from a multicultural perspective. The National Standards for Arts Education, with its subtitle, "What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts," was published in 1994 following the passage of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. The National Standards is not a course of study, but a set of competencies that will serve to engage young people in the process of learning about and participating in music, theatre, dance, and the visual arts. Published by the Music Educators National Conference, the document states that "The visual, traditional, and performing arts provide a variety of lenses for examining the cultures and artistic contribution of our nation and others around the world... Students need to understand that art is a powerful force in the everyday life of people around the world..." (pp13-14) As we learn the stories, dances, and music of various cultures we come to recognize their means of expression as an invaluable part of the world's treasure house which belongs to every human being.

The activities engaged in during this presentation focus on specific elements within the arts. Using the National Standards as our guide, we will maintain an awareness of the uniqueness of each art as well as the similarities among the various arts. Organizing a unit on Japan around a specific element in the arts, for example, the rhythm of dance, of poetry, of song, will result in learning about the culture while focusing on the various arts in meaningful ways. Using the arts to learn about a culture is a wonderful way for you and your students to remember aspects of the culture.

Our first visit along the multicultural kaleidoscope journey is to America where we will sing and use gestures to the traditional game song: "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree." This will be followed by a similar rendition of this song - in Japanese!

Experience #2: American traditional game song
"Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree"

1 2 3 4
Under the spreading chest -- nut tree

5 6
When I knelt down upon my knee.

7 8
We were happy as can be -

1 2 3
Under the spreading chest -- nut tree.

Procedure a) Speak the words in rhythms after the teacher

b) Sing the melody after the teacher, one line at a time

c) Add the motions. The numbers above the words indicate when to apply the motion

1 - spread arms out 2 - hands on chest 3 - hands on head 4 - arms over head

5 - kneel 6 - slap right knee 7 - point to your big smile

8 - arms reach forward with fists tightly closed

Repeat # 1,2,3,4

Additional Activities: (especially for children in upper grades)

a. Add percussion instruments, for example:

To the rhythm, chest - nut tree ___ use woodblock:

To the rhythm, knelt down ___ knelt down ___, play guiro:

At the end of each phrase, play tambourine on the 4th beat.

b. Sing the song and each time eliminate one of the motion words. For example, with the word, "spreading," just do the motion. Then, eliminate "spreading" and "chest" but continue doing the motions for them. Each time students repeat the song, invite them to eliminate the next word to which a motion is done. By the end of the song, few words will be used. The motions will tell the story!

During my stay in Japan I had the opportunity to visit a number of elementary schools. One of the songs I enjoyed with the students was the Japanese version of "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree." We will now apply what we learned in the American version to this song.

"Oo ki na ku ri no ki no shita de"

The following page contains the tune and hand gestures for the Japanese version of "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree." While the language will be unfamiliar to you, if you say it phonetically you should find that the syllables fit into the melody easily. The pictures should be helpful to you when you are ready to add them to the song. Try the following plan when teaching this song:

1. Write the following groups of syllables on individual pieces of cardboard. Number each cardboard accordingly:

1. Oo ki na 2. Ku ri no 3. ki no 4. shi ta 5. de

6. A wa ta to 7. wa ta shi 8. na ka yo ku

9. a so bi ma sho

2. Divide the class into 9 groups. In each group have one student hold the cardboard so that it is visible to the group.

3. Have each group practice their syllables so that they can say them when you call the numbers: 1, 2, 3, etc. After you have gotten to 9, have groups 1,2,3,4,5 say their syllables again.

4. After students can say their part without hesitating as their number is called, show them their particular gesture. Only the teacher should have a copy of the pictures of these gestures. Teach them by rote.

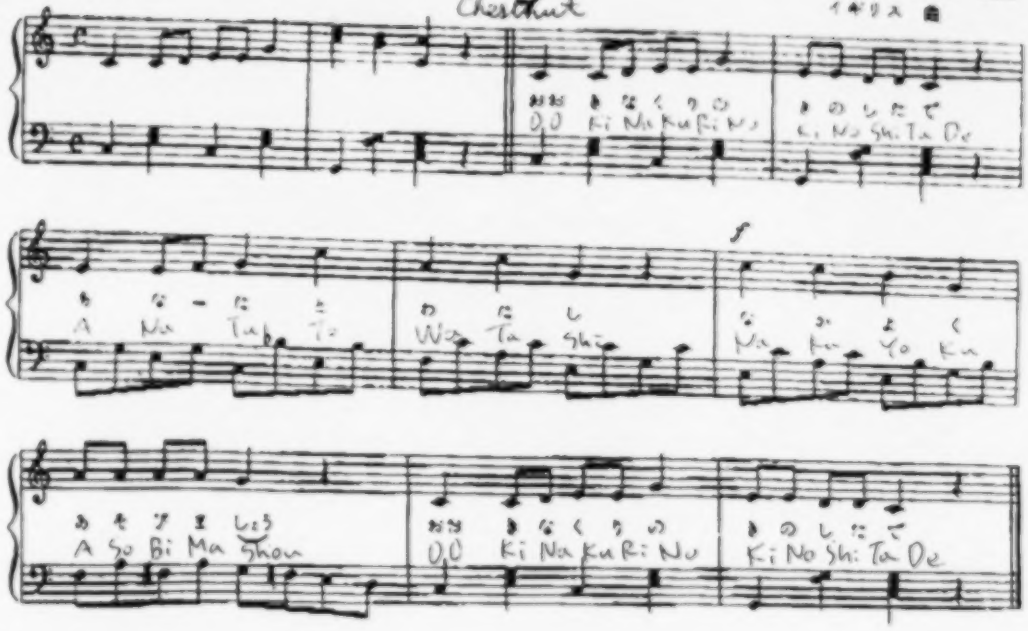
5. See if students can say their part and also do their gesture when their number is called. Then add the familiar melody of "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree " which they learned but now using the Japanese words and gestures.

6. At another time, add a rhythm instrument accompaniment.

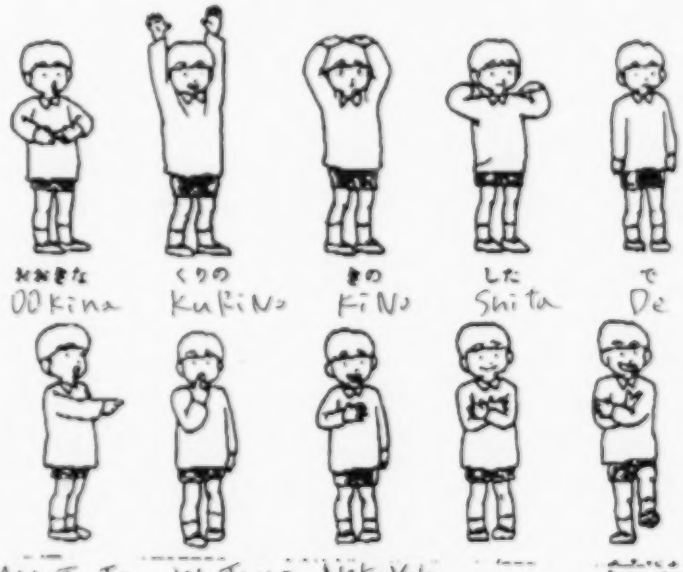
大きなくりの木の下で

♩=104

Chestnut

おおわだつゆき　訳曲
イギリス　曲

○ 3歳児～4歳児

・歌に合わせ，リズミカルに動作して楽しむ遊び。



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No matter what country we focus upon, there are many activities that can be explored using the arts. When focusing on the Japanese culture, for example, Origami (paper folding) is a popular activity to present to young children. Despite the fact that it can be very intricate, there are some basic samples, such as hats and boxes, that can be easily made by most children. Many books are available in stores today that provide step-by-step instructions for origami.

Experience #4: Native American

For most native North American groups, the principal medium for expression is the human voice. Singing is a natural part of their expression as is dance and body movement. Rattles and drums are used for accompaniment of the traditional songs of Native Americans. Voice, drum, and the rattle are linked to the Native American's interaction with nature. Using European stringed and wind instruments place them at a distance from their environment.

I would like to begin by having us all make dancing bells. You will find the materials you need in the small brown bag you received when you entered the room. Colorful felt has been precut into six inch by two inch strips. Begin by threading the colored shoestring through the five holes in the felt. Pretend you are sewing; just run the shoestring in and out through the holes. Thread the jingle bells through as you sew. You may also glue feathers or thread pretty colored beads onto the felt as you sew. When you finish lacing the string through the holes, tie it to your ankle or wrist or upper arm.

After you have secured the dancing bells to your leg or arm, move to an Indian dance. A recommended resource is the video, "Teaching the Music of the American Indian," which is one of four videos compiled from the 1990 Symposium on Multicultural Approaches to Music Education." In the Native American video a variety of dances are included which not only demonstrate the "how to," but also inform the viewer about the different occasions as well as types of Indian dances that have been transmitted by that culture.

Experience #4: Mos' Mos'!

Included in the Native American video is a song from the Hopi Indians entitled, "Mos' Mos'!" This song is about a cat, "mos" or "mosa," which is really an Aztec word.

Say, "mos." ("mos")

The next word is "naitila," which means to steal something.

Say, "naitila." ("naitila")

"Mos' mos' naitila" ("mos' mos' naitila")

What does the cat steal? A sheepskin. "kanelperkye"

Say, "kanelperkye." ("kanelperkye")

Repeat after me:

"mos' mos' naitila." ("mos' mos' naitila")

"mos' mos' naitila." ("mos' mos' naitila")

"kanelperkye naitila." ("kanelperkye naitila")

"mo - sa!" ("mo - sa!")

Now end this by saying in a high, squeaky voice" and using a "scratchy" hand gesture:

Nya, nya, nya, nya, nya.... (this means meow!)

The Challenge for Teaching Multiculturally

When teaching the arts it is necessary to either have some skill in the specific art OR to have the assistance of one who does. What is equally important is that one be aware of the importance of culture in the formation of values. Beyond this there are several specific qualities necessary to the task of cross-cultural music education. As teachers we must seek to develop within ourselves and our students:

-empathy for a wide variety of ethnic values. This goes beyond intellectual understanding since it involves the totality of human feeling, thought, and response to life. To empathize with a culture and its members is to experience the world through new eyes, acquiring new sensitivities. It is to try to see the world through the eyes of that culture. We cannot sit in judgement and use criteria that stem from our own traditions.

-openmindedness toward other arts systems. This means that we are open to various arts and the many ways that each art can be approached and made. I may sing a song in a certain style or draw a house from my own experience of what house looks like to me. I come to appreciate the many variations at different cultural or stylistic levels.

-inquisitiveness. One who teaches in a multicultural framework must be curious about all things human and musical. Being a nonmusician, or non artist, can even be helpful because it might very well leave me open to exploring and to being more accepting of results that are unexpected. In teaching from a multicultural perspective, I need to have interest in how people make the variety of sounds they call music or how they move to express feelings and experiences.

-a macro view of humanity. We are all part of one human family. In the United States itself we are a nation of more pluralities than any other nation on earth. Our strength lies in our diversity. This is also true of the whole world. The strength of the earth's population

lies in its diversity. We are richer because of the beliefs of Jews, Christians, Hindus, the aboriginal peoples of Australia, etc. Imagine a world made up of only belief, one nationality!

Conclusion

Much of what we have done in this workshop has involved each of us in an active way. The arts, by their very nature, invite us, draw us into this type of participation. I hope that this presentation has either reconfirmed your belief in exposing young people to a variety of cultures or else started you thinking about how you might begin to go about teaching from a multicultural perspective.

I encourage you to rely upon the arts in learning about and presenting various cultures. Not only do the arts serve to inform us about the world but, as the National Standards for the Arts tell us, the arts as basic subjects can and need to be taught for their own intrinsic value. Using the arts can help students discover connections between the various arts - line in music, in movement, in poetry. Correlations (showing specific similarities or differences) and integration (using two or more disciplines in ways that are mutually reinforcing) are two other valuable ways to use the arts.

As you leave this workshop, try to commit yourself to teaching from a multicultural perspective, using the arts as your primary vehicle. Read and look, listen and ask. You will soon discover that there is much that is readily available to you.

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